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ABSTRACT

This paper offers a theoretical critique of the curriculum model adopted by Northamptonshire Local Education Authority (LEA) for its Lower Attaining Pupils Programme. It evaluates the way in which Northamptonshire chose to interpret the requirements of the original Department of Education and Science brief at the LEA level. The background section identifies the Northamptonshire program as an illustration of a debate that has been around for 20 years. The paper then discusses seven dilemmas that have been the focus of the debate: (1) the differentiated versus the common curriculum; (2) "vocationalism" within the pre-16 or post-16 curriculum; (3) the school curriculum and the validity of out-of-school experience; (4) the skills in skills-based teaching and learning; (5) the use of profiling as assessment; (6) who the clients are and what is the nature of their complaint, i.e. underachievement; and (7) central direction versus local autonomy: centralization or decentralization. Nearly 60 references are cited. An appendix summarizes the findings of the evaluation of Northamptonshire's Lower Attaining Pupils Programme project that was undertaken by the Further Education Unit. (YLB)

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An Occasional Paper

THE DILEMMAS OF LOW ATTAINMENT

Peter Holly

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THE DILEMMAS OF LOW ATTAINMENT

A critique of Northamptonshire's interpretation of the DES brief for the Lower Attaining Pupils Programme (LAPP)

Peter Holly
Cambridge Institute of Education

FURTHER EDUCATION UNIT

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Dear Sir/Madam

THE DILEMMAS OF LOW ATTAINMENT

This Occasional Paper was commissioned from Peter Holly, Cambridge Institute of Education, as part of the FEU evaluation of the Northamptonshire LAPP project. A summary of that evaluation appears as an Appendix to this document, and has been published separately as an FEU bulletin. A copy of the full evaluation report made to Northamptonshire LEA is available free on request from the FEU.

One of the reasons for the FEU accepting the invitation from Northamptonshire to evaluate was that we were supportive of the general nature of the curriculum being offered. The evaluation in this respect was deliberately supportive, not to say partisan. One aspect of the evaluation, however, required an assessment of the LEA's interpretation of the DES LAPP brief, and for this we commissioned an outsider. This document is the result. Peter Holly describes his appraisal as an 'intrinsic evaluation'. Recognising its theoretical nature, he suggests that the way to see education in action is through 'empirical evaluation' – which of course is what the rest of the FEU project was all about.

In the Background, introducing his dilemmas, Peter Holly identifies the Northamptonshire programme as an illustration of a debate that has been around for twenty years. He suggests that in offering his critique of this LEA project, he is also 'offering a critique of the national initiative'. His 'dilemmas' are not new, and they provide an informed discussion on issues that should perhaps be continuously assessed.

His first dilemma is concerned with the nature and status of a core curriculum and the questions concerning content he asks Northamptonshire are surely applicable elsewhere. His second dilemma is concerned with vocationalism, and his suggested resolution of 'no training

without education' can, and should, be posed well beyond the 14-16 curriculum.

Much the same applies to his discussion of dilemmas three and four, concerned with out-of-school experience and skills. The FEU has generated similar discussions on experiential learning and the entitlement to skills in the context of further and adult education.

Profiling is posed as his fifth dilemma. Are profiles only possible in LAPP-type curricula? A question that is equally applicable to post-16 discussions. The sixth dilemma is concerned with the nature of low achievement and hence the identification of LAPP 'clients'. This is also a discussion that FEU would wish to see more of in post-school education. The questions posed by Holly in paragraph 91 about the nature of failure are surely at the heart of any equal opportunities discussion.

His final dilemma on central versus local authority rehearses familiar issues of ownership and innovation. These are as applicable to FE as they are to schools. He concludes by contemplating a scenario in which the developments introduced in the LAPP national initiative could eventually inform the whole curriculum for all pupils.

It is an unfortunate fact that many educational initiatives are associated only with lower achievers. They are more often than not identified as resulting in some dilution of 'proper education', and by a particular application of the concept of differentiation; worthwhile developments do not sufficiently permeate the whole curriculum. Much the same stigma is accorded to vocational preparation, of which CPVE is a particular example. It is perhaps time that the concept of 'bottom-up' innovation was widened to include learners and their associated curricular content and processes.

These introductory comments, hopefully, make it clear why the FEU accepted the invitation to evaluate a 14-16 curriculum project, and why we are pleased to publish this paper.

Yours faithfully,

Jack Mansell

JACK MANSELL
Chief Officer

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. This paper offers a theoretical critique of the curriculum model adopted by Northamptonshire LEA for its Lower Attaining Pupils Programme. It provides a critique of the way in which Northamptonshire chose to interpret the requirements of the original DES brief at LEA level, including the options of negotiation, profiling, the development of basic skills, work experience, etc. (as set out in the Northamptonshire LEA submission to the DES) in relation to their relevance for the client group identified by the Lower Attaining Pupils Programme (LAPP). This independent appraisal was commissioned by FEU for use as a formative document as part of its evaluation of Northamptonshire's LAPP project* which was undertaken at the invitation of the Authority.

2. The data in which this theoretical critique is grounded includes the original DES brief contained within an official press release dated 16 July 1982 ('Development Projects Planned to Help Lower-Attaining Pupils') and a description of the LEA's intentions ('Northamptonshire Education Authority, Development Project for Lower Attaining Pupils'). My research has taken the form of an *intrinsic evaluation*, which, according to McCormick and James (1983), means that when

> 'the focus is on what *ought* to be taught, the *intended* curriculum .... the principal concern must be for the worth and value of the planned activities .... This type of evaluation can be contrasted with empirical evaluations .... which require a consideration of the curriculum as *experienced* by the pupils.'

3. The term 'intrinsic evaluation' was used by Scriven (1967) to denote a set of judgements concerning the structure of an educational programme, its design and assumptions. According to McCormick and James, intrinsic evaluation 'requires the skills of the philosopher'. Eisner (1985), in accepting this assertion, argues for the importance of 'connoisseurship' and 'criticism' in evaluation, the former being the 'art of appreciation' (based on experienced perception), the latter being the 'art of disclosure'. To Eisner, 'criticism' is not as some people see it ('harping, hacking, negativistic'); instead it is 'conceived of as a generic process aimed at revealing the characteristics and qualities that constitute any human product', thus 'revealing what might have gone unnoticed and therefore unappreciated'. The critic offers a personal interpretation of the elements which constitute (educational) complexity, including judgements concerning their intrinsic worthwhileness. This is my task.

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* *Northamptonshire Local Education Authority's 14-16 Curriculum Project: Evaluation Report* is available free on request from FEU. The FEU evaluation findings are summarised in the Appendix to this report and in the FEU bulletin *An Evaluation of LAPP in Northamptonshire* (July 1987).

4. As an 'armchair theorist', I am also surrounded by the theory of others. When I began to read around the subject of low achieving pupils in secondary schools, I soon realised that there has been a long-standing and continuing debate which is focused on various central educational dilemmas (see the Berlaks, 1982). These dilemmas form the substance of this paper.

5. The dilemmas, all of which are overlapping, are as follows:

— The differentiated versus the common curriculum.

— 'Vocationalism' within the pre-16 or post-16 curriculum.

— The school curriculum and the validity of out-of-school experience.

— Curriculum content versus curriculum methodology; behavioural objectives versus the process model of curriculum planning.

— How to assess pupil progress; the efficacy of pupil profiling.

— The nature and status of achievement and its concomitants, underachievement and failure.

— Central direction of curriculum change versus local autonomy.

Before discussing these dilemmas in depth it is important both to define the curriculum model adopted by Northamptonshire LEA and to place the dilemmas in their historical context.

6. The Northamptonshire curriculum model can be represented diagrammatically as shown in Figure 1. Three points are relevant here:

— the model rests on four basic curriculum areas;

— the dilemmas which form the substance of this paper tend to be embedded in this model;

— this model, of course, concerns curriculum provision in theory; the nature of the real, received curriculum is a matter for empirical research (see Appendix).

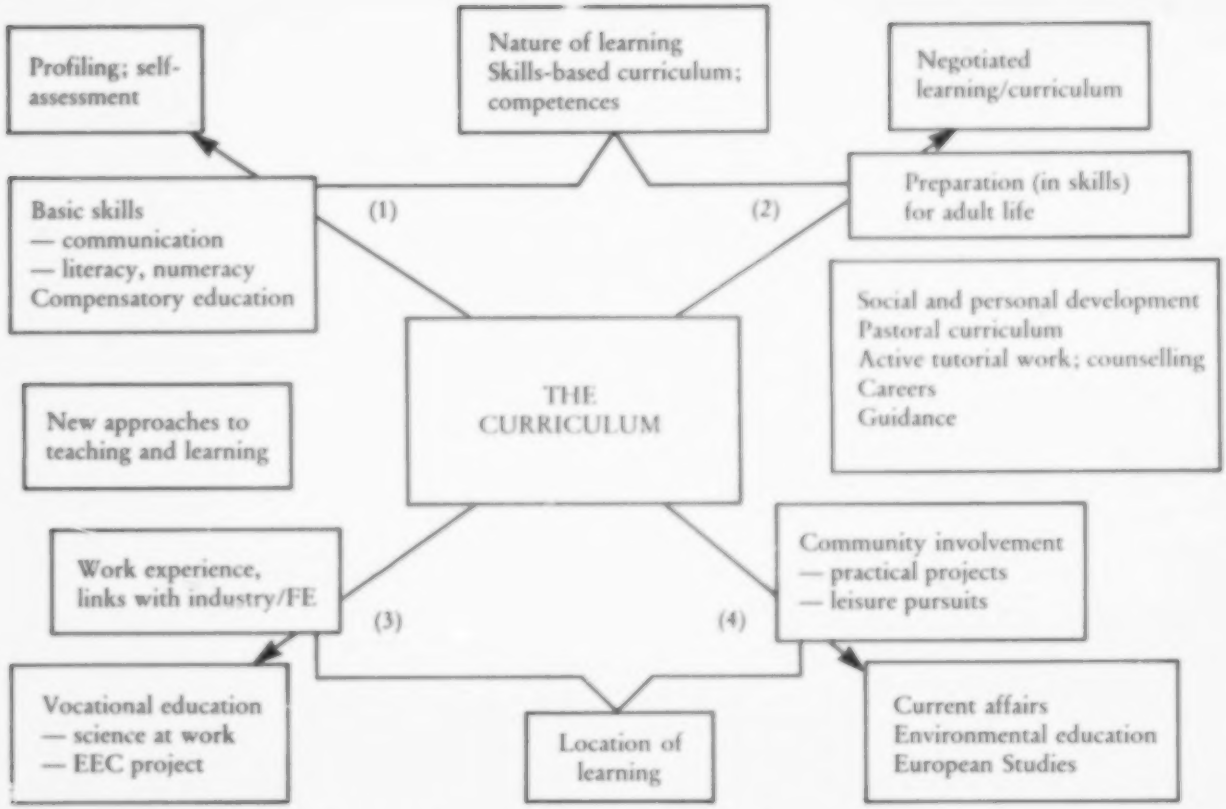

Figure 1: The curriculum model adopted by the Northamptonshire Project

II. BACKGROUND

7. At first the Lower Attaining Pupils Programme appears like 'ROSLA – revisited' or even 'Bantock come home to roost', yet another 'new educational deal' for fourth and, this time around, fifth year pupils 'who are not benefiting fully from school', the aim of which, according to the DES press release (1982), 'is to introduce a more effective education with a practical slant for those pupils for whom public examinations at sixteen-plus are not designed'.

8. The rhetoric is strikingly similar to that of the Newsom Report, first published in 1963, which called not only for the raising of the school-leaving age but also for a curriculum coinciding with the 'natural interests' of older boys and girls of average and less than average ability; improved teaching techniques; a 'range of courses broadly related to occupational interests', the final year of which would be 'deliberately out-going – an initiation into the adult world of work and of leisure'; extra-curricular activities for all, including residential experience; more attention paid to 'imaginative experience through the arts' and personal and social development; and 'leavers' certificates' which would combine 'an internal assessment with a general school record, irrespective of any external examinations they may take'. The report advised schools that they should resist extending public examinations to pupils for whom they were inappropriate. The fact that schools ignored this advice is, of course, a factor behind recent initiatives in the 1980s. Finally, the 1963 report demanded a reappraisal of the provision for all practical subjects, extended workshop and technical facilities and links with further education.

9. In the 1960s such structures became the focus of heated debate. The Schools Council was the first to take up the challenge in its Working Papers 2 (1965) and 11 (1967). In turn these became the object of the scorn of certain philosphers of education; in particular, White (1968 and 1969) linked the differentiated nature of the experimental ROSLA programmes with considerations of social class. By encouraging pupils to tackle topics such as the notorious '97 bus', teachers, argued White, were socialising these pupils by means of 'instruction in obedience'. All secondary schools, according to White, should provide a 'compulsory curriculum for all normal children'. He argued that the Schools Council was not doing this with its curriculum reforms. In fact, instead of a common curriculum for all, the Council was perpetuating, with its different curricula, the old elementary and secondary differences of the 1901-1944 era.

10. Hirst (e.g. 1971) supported White by describing the central objectives of education as developments of mind through initiation into *all* the forms of knowledge – by all (normal) pupils. 'Maybe', admitted Hirst (1967), 'we have still to find the best methods for the majority of people. But let us never lose sight of the intellectual aim upon which so much else.... depends.... it seems to me we

must get away completely from the idea that linguistic and abstract forms of thought are not for some people.'

11. Bantock (1971) joined the fray by expounding upon his theory of popular education, putting forward specific curriculum proposals to provide a satisfactory education for the mass of children for whom the watered-down academic education was failing. In dissenting from Hirst's view that there was no need for a radically new pattern for the curriculum, Bantock argued that many children deserved, as the basis of their curriculum, a more concrete, more practical and 'affective-artistic' orientation. Bantock's views were to coincide with similar opinions being voiced by the authors of the so-called Black Papers.

12. In the meantime, during 1967/68, HMI had conducted a survey into the special arrangements for slow learners in secondary schools and their report (*Slow Learners in Secondary Schools : Education Survey 15*) was published in 1971.

13. While differentiating between long-term and short-term handicap (capable of remediation), the HMI report pointed out the 'disadvantages of an arrangement whereby pupils are withdrawn for remedial work in the three Rs at a time when the rest of the class is engaged in art, craft or physical education – the very areas of the curriculum where the slow learners are likeliest to experience some sense of achievement'. Interestingly, the report was able to identify a trend away from curricular differentiation, but concluded:

> 'Exposure of the slow learners to a full programme of specialist teaching is unfortunately all too common.'

14. HMI thought that such an approach, for those without academic interests, was highly questionable; it fragmented their learning which was 'unrelated to the world of things and people they know'. Furthermore, the survey discovered many static classroom-based activities which rarely allowed for exploration of the environment, for experiment and observation, or for opportunities to talk about and record events. HMI concluded:

> 'In some schools the slow learners endured many periods of boredom relieved only by games and practical subjects... too often the remedial teaching is limited to the acquisition of the basic skills.'

15. The report recommended the recognition of individual differences and the realisation of individual potential and the development of personal interests. Schemes of work should be realistic and rewarding, argued HMI, who, despite White's misgivings, identified as being successful courses involving social service work, rural studies, an introduction to industry, and links with the local techni-

cal college. Above all, it is noteworthy that the report associated curriculum development for low achievers with changing teaching methods and learning styles. It is my contention that the messages of this somewhat unsung report have proved very influential.

16. Clunies-Ross and Wimhurst (1984), in the report of their NFER-sponsored research project, remind us of one of the conclusions contained in the Education Survey 15: that there exists a 'widespread uncertainty of aims, objectives and methods for slow learners in many of the schools visited'. Their research, conducted ten years after the first report was published, investigated the organisation of slow learner provision and its implications in terms of curriculum and staffing/INSET opportunities. Key questions were posed such as: Which pupils qualify as 'slow learners'? (Who are the clients?) How is their curriculum organised and what is its shape? Who is given responsibility for these pupils? What they found was widespread evidence of 'routing' – consisting of restricted options, 'guided' choice, disguised banding, etc. The curriculum reality for many slow learners consisted of specially designed option courses plus a core of basic subjects (in which they often found themselves in bottom sets).

17. Contemporaneously, more evidence was accruing from HMI visits which was included in their report *Slow learning and less successful pupils in secondary schools*. These inspection visits were conducted prior to the launch of the programme of development projects for lower attaining pupils. HMI praised the great thought that teachers had given to making courses practical and appealing; once again mention was made of courses involving work experience and community service. Central concepts emerged; coherence, relevance, practicality and appropriateness were established as the criteria upon which to judge courses. Each student should be given stimulating experiences (avoiding an 'impoverished' curriculum), yet 'nevertheless the curriculum should be broad and balanced'. Accordingly, it should be one:

> 'which does not give a disproportionate amount of time to simply "making and doing" without the demands on thinking that go with them .... Academically less able pupils need to have plenty of opportunities to exercise their imagination and reasoning power.'

18. And still the reports rolled off the presses. Bullock followed by Cockcroft; Warnock; the influential ILEA report *Improving Secondary Schools*; and a glut of DES/HMI papers, culminating in the White Paper published in March 1985, *Better Schools*, which rounds off the debate. The curriculum offered to every pupil should be *broad*, *balanced*, *relevant* and *differentiated*. Breadth involves the acquisition of a wide range of knowledge, understanding and skills. Balance entails allotting sufficient time for each of the curricular experiences to make its

special contribution. Relevance now has two components: on the one hand there is the application to the pupil's own experience and to adult life; on the other 'due emphasis' is given to 'practical aspects'. Differentiation is probably the central concept; and it is determined by matching what is taught and how it is taught with pupils' *individual* abilities and aptitudes. The report concludes:

> 'A curriculum founded on these four principles will serve to develop the potential of every pupil and to equip all for the responsibilities of citizenship and for the challenge of working life in the world of tomorrow.'

19. This, then, was the context for Sir Keith Joseph's speech in July 1982. His desire to help the bottom 40% of the secondary school population, his emphasis on practical education, his call for a fresh look at the teaching of basic skills (and skills for adult life) and his insistence on exploring new methods of assessment were all prefigured in the 20-year-old debate summarised above. In his televised conversation with Richard Lindley (3 March 1983) Sir Keith was able to announce:

> 'I think I am presiding at the moment over an education in which there really is inadequate provision for a very substantial minority.'

20. The decision, of course, was taken actually to do something for this 'substantial minority' and the LAPP initiative was instigated. What are the characteristic elements of the envisaged programme? These are seven-fold:

(a) There is the emphasis on equipping pupils with the necessary skills of communication, literacy and numeracy.

(b) In inviting schools to develop policies for the entire 14-19 age range (in contrast, of course, to the more recent emphasis on the 5-16 curriculum), there is a suggested overlap with what was previously the post-16 preserve of vocational education, with an obvious linkage between the low achievers project and the MSC's Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI). While TVEI aims to cater for the whole ability range, it shares the flavour of *vocationalism*.

(c) In aiming to get the 'mixture right', there is an exhortation to tackle the low attainers' curriculum as a whole; to accept a degree of *differentiation* as an important reality in terms of establishing an alternative set of curricular experiences catering for those pupils for whom public examinations at 16+ are not designed, while avoiding cutting off these pupils from the general life of their school and allowing them 'access to the general range of opportunities to learn'. This, then, is an appeal to what, on the surface, are

contradictory concepts, *breadth*, *balance* and *differentiation*.

(d) Concerning the client group, Sir Keith announced his determination not to demarcate the target population in too rigid a fashion.

(e) The concept of *relevance* appears in the encouragement given to teachers to switch from traditional didactic styles to the 'practical slant' of the Cockcroft Report (which, in its turn, had so impressed Sir Keith).

(f) In the search for more practical courses, cross-institutional co-operation for development is encouraged, as is 'learning outside the classroom', an 'expansion of work experience schemes', and 'activities built around practical projects in the community'. What is important here is not just the style of learning, but the location of learning.

(g) Developments in profiling should be attempted.

21. It needs to be stressed that, superficially, the rhetoric of Northamptonshire's submission (which sought involvement in the development work) reflected Sir Keith's basic agenda in nearly every respect. Two points are relevant here:

(a) This is unsurprising as the LEA would want to receive financial support for their plans and would, therefore, have tailored their proposals to reflect the official statements.

(b) In reflecting Sir Keith's aspiration so closely, however, it means that the central dilemmas inherent in the Government's scheme will be present in the local arrangements and vice versa. In offering a critique, therefore, of Northamptonshire's projected provision, I am also offering a critique of the national initiative.

III. DILEMMA ONE: A COMMON OR DIFFERENTIATED CURRICULUM?

22. Is it better to aspire to offer all pupils what Holt (1983) has called a 'universal education' composed of a set of common learning experiences or to set more realistic goals and offer different pupils qualitatively different sets of experiences? An answer to this question can be offered in philosphical, psychological, sociological or political/ideological terms.

23. Taking the last perspective first, contributors to the curriculum debate such as Bourdieu (1974) and M.F.D. Young (1971) have made the connection between access to knowledge and social control processes and the use made of the curriculum to differentiate between pupils, thus reinforcing the divisions between the social classes. Schooling, in their eyes, and the curriculum in particular, is used to reproduce the social order.

24. More recently, Simon (1984) has argued that there is a concerted attack on comprehensive schools (and presumably the comprehensive 'ideal') through the support of curricular differentiation *within* schools. He supports this assertion by pointing out that there is a perceived threat (on the part of government) of 'over-education in a contracting labour market'. He maintains, therefore, that 'selection' is needed:

> 'due to the fact that education is creating aspirations which society cannot match. Education, unlike the media-created mythology, is being too successful.'

25. Simon's view is a straightforward one: there is an attempt to return to the nineteenth century approach of educating pupils to know their place in society. He sees that there was a trend in the 1970s towards a 'unified, single school with a common curriculum'. But this swing against 'divisive procedures' is now being undermined by the:

> 'deliberate restructuring of the system (from within) embodying processes of continuous differentiation and selection, with each level in the age cohort assimilated to the acceptance of its fore-ordained lot both in the labour market and in the social order.'

Simon quotes Sir Keith Joseph (in the *Times Educational Supplement* 17 February 1984) when the latter announced:

> 'If it is so, as it is, that selection between schools is largely out, then I emphasise that there must be differentiation within schools.'

And in 1985, in the White Paper, *Better Schools*, differentiation, of course, was given the official stamp of approval.

26. Certainly the Northamptonshire scheme reflects the decision to differentiate. What is on offer in curriculum terms is for a certain kind of student – it is not on offer throughout the ability range. It is declared to be a more appropriate and realistic attempt to match the needs of those pupils not catered for at present within the examination system. It could be argued that it is an honest, sincere attempt to help those pupils disadvantaged by moves towards the common (academic?) curriculum.

27. As Ozolins (1982) has argued, the middle-class common curriculum promoted by Holt (1978) and Lawton (1975) has failed to promote 'a working-class culture' and a curriculum designed in the interests of working-class children. He maintained that such pupils should be enabled to become *articulate* (that literacy and communication skills were all important); that 'serious heed should be paid to their life chances' and the need for them to understand the nature of *work* in social and economic terms; and that *local studies*, in his opinion, could be a liberating rather than constraining element in their lives.

28. Building on this approach, Murphy (1984) has argued that the expansionist opportunities (within the comprehensivisation of schools), created ostensibly to benefit working-class children, have been stormed/colonised by the middle class. This monopoly has been achieved within their own domain (schooling), which is permeated by their own values. The truth is, he argues, that:

> 'educational commentators have failed to see that one pupil's education is another's incarceration. And in so doing have failed to see that, in making education fairer and HE bigger, they have succeed only in indulging at great public expense those of an academic disposition.'

This amounts to what Murphy refers to as a 'conspicuous indulgence of a minority taste' which gives 'ignorance a bad name and the ignorant a bad time'.

29. Ozolins has also questioned whether the common curriculum could ever become the common curriculum as received by all pupils. This is a major point. The intended curriculum is rarely matched by the actual, received curriculum. But some curricular intentions are more (over)ambitious than others. Added to this is the point that it is questionable whether the 'universal curriculum' (so elevated in the rhetoric of some observers) ever attained the pre-eminence which it is now deemed to be losing. The dominant *actual* pupil experience was a differentiated one – accompanied by much disaffection on the part of those actually differentiated against (see Woods, 1979, and Willis, 1977).

30. In supporting Ozolin's assertions, Skilbeck has called into question the 'assumptions of progressivists: that common learning may best be achieved by a common core of studies; that equality and social mix are best achieved in a common school; that single message systems (e.g. textbooks, assignments cards, television broadcasts) carry the same message to all learners.' Is the commonly experienced curriculum a false ideal?

31. The question still arises, however: what is the shape of the curriculum being offered to these so-called 'low achieving' pupils and can it be judged in terms of such criteria as breadth, balance and relevance – given the fact that it is differentiated from what is on offer to other pupils?

32. The point to make, of course, is the emphasis placed on individual needs and interests and the importance of *negotiation* in determining the shape of a pupil's alternative curriculum. The irony could be that the principle of negotiation (promoted for motivational – and learning – considerations) is undermining those curricula criteria mentioned above which have received so much official attention since the publication of the 'Red Book' in 1977. Moreover, given the fact that it is a differentiated set of experiences, how successfully does an individual pupil's curriculum match up against the list of areas of experiences mentioned in the same publication (aesthetic/creative, ethical, linguistic, mathematical, physical, scientific, social/political and spiritual)?

33. The arguments – concerning curricular balance, etc. – are well-rehearsed in the recent Hargreaves Report, which, it should be remembered, was commissioned mainly to investigate the problems of 'underachievement' in secondary schools in ILEA.

34. This report likened a curriculum to a person's diet; is it, asks the report, broad but healthily balanced, offering differing quantities depending on such considerations as age, stage of development and individual (special) nutritional needs? What is the whole curriculum offered to each pupil? Is it fragmentary, a series of unconnected parts? Is it uncoordinated and, therefore, incoherent? It is apparent in these questions that the concept of 'breadth', as mentioned previously, relates to the *range* of experiences offered; that 'balance' refers to the nature and suitability of the mixture, and that an additional concept, 'coherence', refers to the 'wholeness' of the package.

35. The report also pointed out, however, that there can be balance and coherence within a 'subject' area (e.g. within English) and across subject areas (e.g. within the creative and expressive arts). It concluded:

> 'The committee is emphatic that even the most disadvantaged pupils should have a balanced curriculum.'

The fear is that 'imbalance' will result in 'insistent and exclusive drilling' in skills of literacy and numeracy; too much emphasis on basic skills can be counter-productive, alienating pupils from learning.

36. The report also covered the common curriculum versus options debate; it warned against pupils being allowed to make an unbalanced selection of options and concluded that there should be an enlarged 'core' plus 'constrained' options (i.e. that all pupils have to choose one aesthetic subject). This would afford each pupil an 'entitlement curriculum', offered at the appropriate level.

37. In the light of this discussion, how does the Northamptonshire curriculum for low achievers match up? Given the four major areas – basic educational needs, preparation for adult life, work experience and community involvement – it should be noted that 'subsidiary' areas are also mentioned. This list includes: communication skills, literacy and numeracy; compensatory education; European Studies, environmental education, science at work, and current affairs; physical and artistic pursuits; preparation for leisure; careers and vocational education; and, possibly, social and personal development. The following questions arise concerning the balance and breadth of this particular 'diet':

— Where is the spiritual (or ethical/moral) experience catered for?

— Does the 'science at work' module offer enough 'science', enough laboratory experience?

— Does the emphasis on basic skills allow room for the kind of practical mathematics advocated in the Cockcroft Report?

— What about (English) literature?

— What is the place of information technology?

— Is the aesthetic area given enough emphasis?

— Where would craft, design and technology fit in?

Curiously, given some of the rhetoric, there seems an imbalance towards courses offering 'social and life skills' and against what might be called 'practical subjects'. There also appears to be an orientation towards what White might call 'local studies'. And, finally, there is a clear vocational flavour to the diet – the theme of the second dilemma.

IV. DILEMMA TWO: 'VOCATIONALISM' OR NOT?

38. 'Vocationalism' embraces both vocational training (specific job-related preparation) and vocational education (a more general linkage with the world of work). For some commentators, it is a pejorative term. Holt (1983), for instance, sees it as undermining his vision of universal education. While the compilers of the Hargreaves report were able to announce that 'we are not against vocational education in school' and that 'the curriculum must have a relevance to the world of work and to pupils' future occupations and occupational aspirations', they concluded that a 'vocational stream' (thus creating bipartism) should be avoided at all costs.

39. Holmes and Jamieson (1983) claimed that the Manpower Services Commission, prior to its TVEI initiative, had felt very frustrated with the inability of schools to respond to the economic and social changes occurring around them; a comparison with our European counterparts, they argued, would show how small is Britain's commitment to systematic, formal vocational preparation. It is partly a question of cultural status. Ironically, as they pointed out, vocationalism across the curriculum might reduce not heighten curricular differentiation. On the other hand, however, as Lawton (1985) recently questioned, why is so much emphasis being placed on vocationalism at a time of massive (particularly youth) unemployment?

40. Vocationalism has been the subject of a continuing debate between Holt (1983 and 1984) and a spokesperson for TVEI (see Lea, 1984). Holt's argument is a straightforward one: the universal ('liberal') education offered by the common curriculum ensures 'education for freedom' in terms of 'independent judgement and rational action', but this must rest on an unadulterated curriculum, 11-16, offering a 'guaranteed education'. It must be *education* before (vocational) *training*. And this is the flaw in his argument: he makes no allowance for the possibility (and potential) of *vocational education*. He equates vocationalism with training and the 'production model of schooling – of behavioural objectives and means-end planning' .... 'a narrow strait-jacket of skills and competences'.

41. Lea begins his rejoinder in swashbuckling fashion:

> 'As he (Holt) peers over the battlement of the ivory tower enshrining his universal 11-16 curriculum, (he) may be excused for his sensitivity to the rumbling ground under his feet, and even for firing a few panicky arrows at the fast developing structure of the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative.'

Yet he, in turn, overreaches himself:

> 'If we are to regard motivation as crucial to achievement and confidence and we accept that only a small minority of young people are adequately motivated by a general target of so many subject passes at "O and CSE" level, *then we are recognising the need for a vocational focus* to study at school for many pupils which will give confidence and perspective to the various areas of learning experience for them.'

The non-sequitur does not enhance the argument; yet he does have a point when he refers to the 'freedom' of vocationalism – the 'loosening of the subject-bound curricular strait-jacket'.

42. In this context it needs to be emphasised that the Northamptonshire submission was directed to Sir Keith Joseph *and* the EEC's Transition from School to Work Programme – in order to 'improve the preparation of young people for work and to facilitate their transition from education to working life'. The submission also draws attention to the work experience placements within a 'continuous programme of work induction involving school-based courses, visits and skill-training'. Perhaps the resolution of the dilemma is 'no training without education'.

V. DILEMMA THREE: THE IMPORTANCE OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL EXPERIENCE?

'A boy who had just left school was asked by his former headmaster what he thought of the new buildings. "It could all be marble, sir," he replied, "but it would still be a bloody school."'

43. This famous quotation included in the introduction to the Newsom Report reminds us of one of the reasons for the interest of the DES in supporting this development project – pupil disaffection and lack of motivation leading to truancy. This phenomenon, according to the Hargreaves Report, had become alarmingly widespread amongst low attaining pupils in particular. According to Lindley (1983), in London, one in four pupils in the last year of compulsory schooling was not in school at all. Low achievement, disenchantment and disaffection on the part of so many pupils seem to have two inter-locking ingredients:

— aversion to the curriculum on offer to them (and the concomitant feeling of lack of opportunity); the sinking feeling of the 'sink' group;

— aversion to school as an institution.

44. During the 1970s many comprehensive schools experimented with various kinds of outdoor activity sessions often for the wrong reasons – one rationale, sometimes proferred, for organising such courses was to prevent such disaffected pupils contaminating the rest of the school population. Perhaps this was a case of attempting to treat the symptom rather than investigating the underlying causes of the problem.

45. More recently, however, there have been important developments in the conception of 'schooling' – and, indeed, 'learning'. Commentators have been more prepared to understand (and to countenance) the nature of institutional aversion – or, as Murphy refers to this phenomenon, *incarceration*.

46. Curiously, many of the messages of the so-called de-schooling movement of the 1960s are now being taken much more seriously – especially the emphasis on the widening of vistas of experience and learning. Jules Henry (1954), for instance, once remarked:

> 'On the basis of my observations, I feel that when people fail to function adequately in an organisation, the areas of stress in the formal organisation itself must be examined. In other words, before

> one identifies certain people as operating inappropriately within the organisation, some attention should be focused on the difficulties inherent in the organisation itself.'

More recently Bazalgette (1983) has spoken in similar vein:

> '"The madness" lies not in the pupils but in the organisation: were that to become "sane" by bringing the various skills, values and attitudes for which the school stands into a coherent and intelligible shape, many children would be released from the high walls and defensive doors they have created within which to protect themselves.'

47. In this context I would offer two observations. The first is that 'schools' should be organised and managed first and foremost in the interests of the *furtherance* of teaching and learning; and the second is that, to this end, there should be an exploration of institutional 'boundary' in terms of this educative process. How do pupils learn most effectively? How can 'educational institutions' reflect and support this process? If pupils are off-site, can they still be learning and can they be considered to be 'in school'? It is my contention that questions such as these are now being asked – and action taken as a result – particularly within LAPP initiatives.

48. In the 1984 S.H. Foulkes annual lecture organised by the Group-Analytic Society, the speaker, Dr Robin Skynner, addressed the problem of 'Institutes (and Institutions) and How to Survive Them'. Quoting the family as his institutional exemplar, Dr Skynner argued the case for creating the 'healthy family' by juxtaposing times of close, intense group activity against independent action outside the group. In so doing, he advocated the benefits of 'going to grandma's' when the child/children of the family can relax – and feel that 'fun', as opposed to the serious routine of family life, is on the agenda – outside the usual institutional ground rules of the nuclear family, but within the institution that is the extended family. In Dr Skynner's view, this 'time-out' facility can strengthen rather than weaken the usual institutional ties. 'Can schools learn from this?', I asked (see Holly, 1984b):

> 'Is it possible to be flexible enough to institutionalise 'letting go' which could prove to be a set of alternative yet very real learning experiences? Is it worth taking the risk?'

49. One school within another LAPP sc[illegible]e has evaluated its programme of residential outdoor educational activities (... Holly *et al*, 1984). A working party had been set up within the school and its members discussed such questions as:

— Is it feasible to involve all (fourth-year) pupils?

— What is the relationship between these visits and the pupils' 'mainstream' schooling?

— Should each visit be an integral part of the pupils' curriculum or a one-off experience?

— What should be the 'philosophy' of the visits?

— What standards of behaviour should be expected during these visits?

— What is the pastoral intent?

It was apparent that if each visit was to be a qualitatively different set of curricular experiences, then many of their colleagues were sceptical in terms of the resulting disruption of both the normal classroom atmosphere and the continuing nature of coursework. Talk of a 'negotiated curriculum' and the 'utilisation of problem-solving skills' had added to the scepticism.

50. Maybe, however, these are the signs of things to come; maybe we are about to witness what the de-schoolers called the 'disestablishment of schools' and the exploration of 'thinkable alternatives'.

51. Fletcher (1984) has reminded us of Goodman's suggestions, namely that:

— children might be formed into groups *outside* the school and given the opportunity to pursue their own interests rather than being constrained by the organised curriculum of the school;

— teaching can take place outside the school building.

'There is no reason', says Fletcher, 'why good teaching and effective learning should not take place in streets, cafes, parks, museums, factories etc.' and in the countryside and on the hillsides – as in the case of the school above.

52. Perhaps, however, such developments constitute a major shift in institutional thinking. As Jules Henry concluded:

> 'Obviously, a social organisation really has no "shape" .... rather, the image that a culture has of an organisation represents, in part, the way in which people in that culture expect things to get done – that is, a set of values. In our culture these values include responsibility, authority, command, obedience, dominance and submission.'

Except, of course, that some pupils get it wrong; they do not value packaged schooling and experience what Fletcher describes as:

> 'the disaffection and alienation felt by those "drop-outs" who, in the competitive process .... (are deemed to) have "failed"'.

53. What is encouraging is that Northamptonshire's intended curriculum is distinctly outward-looking; mention is made, for instance, of a significant commitment to 'practical activities and out-of-school experience'.

54. It is worth noting, however, that there is a wider community to be experienced outside the local community. Alternatively, when Lindley (1983) observed a social studies class debating how to spend the government budget in Peru, he commented that this school-devised course 'did not .... include any study of conditions in the area where most of the school-leavers were going to live' (and thus back to the White/Ozolins debate).

55. Above all, though, the crucial link is being forged between experiential learning, a broader conception of learning and out-of-school activities. When Sir Keith Joseph advocated a curriculum with a 'practical slant' and teaching/learning methods which are 'applicable to real situations', there was a clear invitation to teachers to aim to develop the life skills of their pupils *within real-life situations*, i.e. including outside the school. Perhaps 'linked courses' with FE constitute a positive step forward.

56. Yet, past experience in the area of 'linked courses' has not been encouraging. As Clunies-Ross and Wimhurst (1984) concluded:

> '.... schemes containing work experience and/or community education opportunities were less frequently encountered, and link courses with local FE colleges even less so.'

Consequently, their report called for deliberations in such key areas as 'the means whereby links with support agencies and establishments *beyond* school can be made and, where appropriate, incorporated into the curricular programme offered to slow learning pupils.

57. It is not just a question of the location of learning, however, it is also a question of the *style of learning*.

VI. DILEMMA FOUR: WHAT ARE THE SKILLS IN SKILLS-BASED TEACHING AND LEARNING?

> 'The present drive to improve the standards of the bottom 40% which has been rightly initiated by Sir Keith, to the applause of the educational world, is an indication that .... many comprehensives have proved weakest in the areas where it was hoped they might be strong – equipping the less able with skills, rather than giving them an academic education.'
>
> Judith Todd *The Observer* (4 August 1985)

58. For all pupils, but for lower attaining pupils in particular, there is an important balance to be struck between the teaching and acquiring of basic skills and the development of what might be called higher order skills and the acquisition of understanding, awareness and even knowledge.

59. There is a move towards defining the curriculum in terms of skills to be acquired and, according to Lea (1984), the recognition of the widespread application and transferability of the skills of communication, analysis, design, calculation and problem solving. Such an approach could well provide the 'coherence' mentioned earlier in this paper, a point made in the Hargreaves Report. Holt (1984), however, warns against the 'rhetoric of skills' and uses Golby's quotation to support his argument:

> 'If we isolate skills and teach them as detached performances, however successfully, we shall leave the student with no means of employing them in appropriate situations.'

60. Certainly the 'feel' of the intended LAPP initiative in Northamptonshire is one of a package of various innovations which all involve changing styles (and strategies) of teaching and learning. Some commentators have remarked on the irony of so much 'progressive'-sounding rhetoric emanating from such a surprising source – a DES-inspired programme.

61. Brennan (1985), for instance, has charted the growth of what must be seen as related innovatory 'packages' (e.g. TVEI, CPVE, etc.) and has singled out, as an influential event, the publication of the Mansell Report (*A Basis for Choice*) in 1979 by the FEU. This document has probably had an important 'backwash' effect on the 14-16 curriculum. Yet, as Brennan has pointed out, two classroom 'cultures' seem to have arisen within such developments.

62. First, there is the emphasis on experiential learning, negotiation and new techniques in assessment all of which embody improved relationships between teacher and taught. Brennan concludes:

> 'In a curious way, one hears echoes of the professional debates in the late '60s concerning Plowden philosophy in the primary schools. There is an uncanny resemblance between the spirit of *child-centred philosophy* that seems to underpin so much of pre-vocational thinking at the present time . The development of skills, learning through experience, group activity with its opportunities for discussion, the importance of good record keeping as a corollary – it is all there.'

Yet, as Brennan has pointed out, not all advocates of pre-vocationalism are totally convinced about the merits of such an approach. Some are shying away from the implications of promoting autonomous learning and the process (of learning) before curriculum content. 'It is inconceivable' says Brennan:

> 'that the "student-centred" model of learning can ever be pursued *à outrance*. Indeed, given the main function of pre-vocational training, it would be naive to think that this could ever be so.'

What then is the alternative or the moderating force? What is the 'content'?

63. The second culture is that inspired by the Mansell Report; Brennan calls it the 'apotheosis of the objectives model of curriculum planning'. He continues:

> 'It is hard to conceive of any issue which has so challenged the idea of personal growth as that of the "engineering model".... despite much professional opposition, it has now rooted itself strongly in the schools, particularly at the post-16 stage.'

64. Both cultures appeal to 'skills acquisition'. The first culture, for instance, calls it the 'process approach' (see Stenhouse, 1975). Hilton (1983) provides the example of a 'skills-based science curriculum' in which the student is enabled to 'do' science by 'being a scientist', i.e. acquiring scientific skills. Stenhouse saw this as the teacher establishing 'principles of procedure'. The process skills reflect the nature of the discipline, in this case, science. According to Hilton, this approach brings 'clarity and coherence' and avoids the 'clutter of content'. This was also the stance of the Cockcroft Report concerning 'practical maths'. The second culture, on the other hand, tends to view skills as 'behavioural objectives' (so disliked by Stenhouse). It could be, however, that these two polarities might not be so distant from each other. The Mansell Report, seen as an 'objectives document' and therefore within the second culture, certainly promotes the importance of skills and states the desirability of describing specific objectives.

But these objectives can be both performances to achieve and experiences from which to learn. The report concludes:

> 'The term "experience" is intended to include certain college-based learning experiences (such as role-play or group activities) and also exposure to events (such as a public meeting). The term "performance" is also meant to be interpreted broadly. It could mean the demonstration of a skill, the ability to use a concept, the exhibition of knowledge, or the demonstration of a given attitude.'

The document also underlines the fact that its list of core skills ('checklists of objectives') should not be read as a teaching scheme, but as 'process or student skills'.

65. Perhaps any confusion here is caused by the fact that those promoting the two cultures are appealing to different levels of skill – and different types of skill (e.g. basic skills, cognitive and study skills, life and social skills, etc.). The Hargreaves Report has usefully discriminated between theoretical knowledge (learning from books), theoretical skill (knowing and understanding how to do something), practical knowledge (of different applications), and practical skill (being able to diagnose and rectify problems). The report argued that pupils should have experience in all four dimensions in order to achieve a balanced curriculum.

66. Submerged in this debate is the fact that there is a different model of teaching and learning emerging. Pupils are being encouraged to assume active learning roles, to be flexible and capable of 'supported self-study' (FEU, 1983), to be autonomous within the confines of reality:

> 'The components of this concept (flexible learning) include learner autonomy and effectiveness, which are dependent in turn on the extent to which the process of learning is matched to the individual learner's needs for employment or otherwise, via negotiation, and counselling and guidance.'

A reading of FEU documents soon reveals their influence on curriculum thinking in Northamptonshire. Negotiation, of course, is a key concept.

67. According to the original submission, the central teaching (and learning) strategy is one based upon *negotiation*:

> 'Whereby the student's own needs and interests can be met through an agreed curriculum programme which is *mutually determined*.'

The process of negotiation (what is the difference between negotiation and

guided choice?) is said to include: discussion of objectives and the range of options available; definition of educational goals: specialist counselling; selection of options (modules?); agreement on time allocation, periodic assessment and *curriculum balance*; agreement on assessment techniques; formulation of a contract; and the establishment of machinery for self-evaluation concerning the acquisition of skills, etc.

68. The rhetoric here, as mentioned previously, is student-centred. Could this involve tension between teacher-selected progression and student self-selection? Could the pupil 'negotiate' out of a balanced curriculum? What if there are no (teacher-valued) interests upon which to build? Could there be a danger here of enhancing personal responsibility and motivation at the cost of invoking 'impoverishment' in curriculum terms. If pupils are allowed to 'vote with their feet', what are the curricular implications? Is it opting out or negotiating in? Is negotiation seen purely in motivational terms?

69. The relationship between motivation and achievement is, of course, a central one and will be scrutinised in Chapters VII and VIII.

VII. DILEMMA FIVE: THE USE OF PROFILING AS ASSESSMENT?

70. Profiling, or the recording of achievement, is often seen as the concomitant of the negotiated curriculum; the negotiation of one's curriculum followed by the negotiation of one's assessment (in terms of the recording of levels of skill attainment). Whether profiling reflects curriculum changes or determines these changes is a moot point. Certainly some commentators would argue that a profile report could bring about a reconsideration of the relevance of some curricula, a move away from an examination-led curriculum and a broadening effect on the future fourth and fifth year curriculum.

71. Broadfoot (1979) has asserted that motivation is affected by the mode of assessment; self-assessment and self-recording, according to this argument, could be highly motivational. Criterion-referenced assessment (in which levels of attainment are defined in advance and pupils are encouraged to reach the standard specified) has become increasingly popular. Broadfoot, in fact, made the point that making both the pupil and the teacher responsible for recording progress 'saves some alienation of the pupil towards the work set'; but the goals and targets that are set must be realistic so that the pupil feels that he/she has a chance of achieving them.

72. Therefore, when Sir Keith Joseph acknowledged that profiles are part of the alternative package to 'public examinations (*as they are at present*)', there was a strong hint of changes to come. Yet with the announcement of the introduction of GCSE (21 June 1984) – Simon saw it as 'a system embodying differentiation and grading of Byzantine complexity' – and the AS levels in 1985, the examination system does seem more all-embracing than ever. Indeed, in the White Paper *Better Schools*, the Government announced its intention to raise general levels of attainment and performance – the aim is for 80-90% of all 16-year-olds to achieve average ability (grade 4 in the CSE). Perhaps Simon was right and there is a concerted attempt to return to the tripartite system by establishing three 'tracks' – the academic, the technical/vocational and the low achievers' programme. Simon concludes:

> 'For what Keith Joseph likes to call "the bottom 40%" plans are still unclear .... (but he has) developed ideas for short-term "criterion-referenced" testing as a means of motivating and holding the interest of this large group of students, whose very real educational needs seem otherwise disregarded. Even the helots must be literate.'

According to Simon, profiling provides 'ominous implications from the social control angle'.

73. Yet when Tim Brighouse reviewed the progress of the Oxford Certificate of Educational Achievement (*Times Educational Supplement* 16 March 1984) he was able to claim that in-built negotiation of tasks was beginning both to improve personal relationships and to bring about a change in teaching stance – from instructor to manager, from imparter of information to consultant, from teaching at the front to sharing/leading in a group. The learning experience is being increasingly seen as a partnership. This, of course, entails a radical change for many teachers – especially when they work in schools not geared up to face such changes.

74. Profiling is high on the Northamptonshire agenda. With the basic aim of enabling a student's (skill) achievements and interests to be documented in a more effective way, the profile is integral to the continuing nature of curriculum negotiation in which the student's progress is recorded in relation to mutually determined objectives. It is one of the 'building blocks of the new approach' according to the Bristol-based Youth Education Service (Brockington, White and Pring, 1984); their list also includes:

> 'Experience-based learning, personal and social development through group work, a programme of work 'negotiated' between teacher and pupil, graded assessment, learning from the workplace, the skills of basic literacy and numeracy and communication.'

75. The profile, then, is seen as a formative document, but as a vehicle for assessment it has its drawbacks (see Nuttall and Goldstein, 1984). Their reservations will need to be noted; for example, that it is unrealistic to talk in terms of instituting either norm-referenced or criterion-referenced assessment, because:

> 'It is extremely difficult to imagine a criterion-referenced assessment that is totally independent of norm labels.'

In addition, if 'work-skill categories' are scaled either side of a norm, when it comes to assessing low achieving pupils the decision is a simple one (can or can't do) whereas it is a quantitative decision concerning all other pupils. This, according to the authors, is another instance of disguised differentiation leading to demotivation.

76. Yet, according to the *Times Educational Supplement* (17 June 1983) a personal profile is intended to be a 'celebration of success', which is meant to be motivational and to 'compensate for failure'. But, as everyone admits, time is required to provide opportunities for profiling to happen in a suitable fashion. As Doe comments (with some candour) in the same feature:

> 'In other words, if profiles come in, something else in the curriculum

has to go out, which is one of the reasons why they are easier to introduce for the non-academic pupil.'

77. If profiles are easier to introduce for the non-academic pupils, as Burgess and Adams (1985) point out, *some* pupils will be given more responsibility for their own learning and not others. Schools will have to adjust to this differentiation of expectations.

VIII. DILEMMA SIX: WHO ARE THE CLIENTS AND WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THEIR 'COMPLAINT', i.e. UNDERACHIEVEMENT?

78. There is a definite ambivalence, even vagueness, in the official statements when it comes to curriculum differentiation (see Dilemma One) and which pupils are to be differentiated (against? for?). Sir Keith Joseph has been quoted as saying that the development projects should tackle the pupils' curriculum 'as a whole'. A whole curriculum for one pupil, however, might have different constituent parts from the whole curriculum of another pupil. As Sir Keith maintained, when he launched the programme:

> 'There is sometimes a tendency to plan the organisation of a school around the needs of the more successful pupils and the demands of examination courses . I believe that in all too many instances we have still not got the mixture right for those pupils who are usually described as lower attainers.'

79. So what is required, if my reading of these statements is correct, is a different, alternative 'mixture' to stand alongside the academic channel, while:

> 'all pupils should be able to take their full part in the general life of their school and all should have access to the general range of opportunities to learn.'

Social integration would seem to have a prime purpose here – to ameliorate the disintegrated curriculum. Thus, Simon (1985) is able to talk of a selective system *within* schools – comprising three channels: GCSE, MSC/TVEI, and 'special courses for Sir Keith's "bottom 40% "'. But, according to Simon, such moves are camouflaged and therefore more insidious.

80. The official rhetoric, however, does not suggest such rigidity. For example, according to the original advance publicity:

> 'In setting up this programme it was not the intention to make too rigid a distinction between groups of pupils. Any definition is bound to be arbitrary ... many pupils with low attainments in some subjects have high attainments in others.'

The aim would seem to be the creation of a floating group of 'clients', whoever they are. But to qualify according to the status of 'low achievement', are they failing, whether specifically – in certain areas – or more generally?

81. Who is failing whom? Are we talking about underachieving pupils or underachieving schools? Two points immediately present themselves in this context:

— the seemingly interchangeable usage of the terms 'lower attaining', 'lower achievers', and 'slower learners'. (Are these comparative terms being used to describe the same phenomenon? Are they in fact, interchangeable?)

— the frequent usage of terms such as 'low attainers', 'low achievers' and 'slow learners' in the sense that they constitute a more definite, once-and-for-all 'condition'.

What is the status and nature of such related concepts as achievement, underachievement and failure? Who are the clients of the Lower Attaining Pupils Programme? And why are they characterised so?

82. Sir Keith Joseph refered to those pupils in the fourth and fifth years who 'are not benefiting fully from school'. The sense here is that such pupils could benefit *more fully* from school. There is 'slack' to take up, there is potential that is unrealised. Nevertheless, however, for these pupils 'the traditional examination and examination-influenced courses are not appropriate'. They are beyond the examination pale; mainly because, as Sir Keith asserted, they remain 'those pupils for whom public examinations at 16+ are not designed'. They were never meant to take these examinations – they are below the examination system's radar screen; they are the 'bottom 40%' – presumably according to a normal distribution curve of intelligence quotients. These pupils are the 'less successful' ones – another euphemism to describe their status – for whom 'curricular and teaching approaches.... are inappropriate' (see Bantock *et al*) and who are not suited to, or motivated by, examination courses.

83. The above quotations are all from the DES/Northamptonshire advance publicity material concerning this particular project. Other descriptions could be added: for instance, those pupils who remain in need of acquiring not only the basic skills of communication, literacy and numeracy, but also life and social skills (which, presumably, are acquired by other pupils by osmosis). They are the 'non-academic' pupils who deserve a more practical slant to their work; and, perhaps more intriguingly, they are the ones who have been let down by the failure of the curriculum to be meaningful and relevant. They are the 'disaffected', the 'disillusioned', the unmotivated who have been served by a curriculum that is of considerable irrelevance to their needs, their interests and the realities of their (future) working lives.

84. Hargreaves (1983), in his influential report, maintains that:

'The concepts of achievement and underachievement are com-

monplace in educational discourse, but they are used in a great variety of ways with different meanings and connotations according to the context of their use.'

He refers to the two most frequently used meanings:

— the gap between potential and actual achievement in a general sense;

— the narrower sense of potential (as indicated by IQ), performance (as measured by an attainment test) and their mismatch.

85. Hargreaves, however, refuses to be bound by such definitions and seeks a broader, more positive conception. His quest is to discover ways of reinforcing *motivation*, a sense of achievement and self-esteem by breaking into the 'circle of achievement'. He wants to be able to discover achievement in all its forms – to find a better means to record, unearth, register and, therefore, bring about (further) achievement. While, in his estimation, public examinations are not capable of measuring the whole range of knowledge, skills, abilities and qualities, he wants to find mechanisms which will fulfil this purpose. Above all, he wants to reduce underachievement by tapping the 'unrealised potential for achievement'.

86. The strength of his argument lies in its sophistication. Hargreaves, for instance, identifies four main aspects of achievement:

(i) the kind of achievement recorded by public examinations, which emphasises *written* evidence of the ability to *recall propositional knowledge* (as opposed to skills);

(ii) the (practical rather than theoretical) capacity to be able to apply knowledge, which emphasises oral, problem-solving and investigational skills;

(iii) personal and social skills, such as the ability to communicate, to co-operate, etc;

(iv) the prerequisite for the other aspects of achievement and an achievement in its own right, the capacity to be motivated and committed which involves the development of self-confidence and perseverance. Hargreaves' major assertion is that schools constrain this aspect, thus causing further underachievement in the other aspects. He concludes:

> 'In one sense, aspect (iv) is the most important of all, since without it achievement in the other three aspects is likely to be very limited ....'

87. He also stresses that working-class pupils are particularly vulnerable here; because they come to school with 'low levels of aspect (iv)' and are reliant, as many middle-class pupils are not, on constant reinforcement and basic help in this crucial area. It is, says Hargreaves, too easy for teachers to opt out and blame the pupils.

88. In similar vein, the Cockcroft Report (1982) cites lack of confidence and inappropriate teaching as constituent factors towards the *temporary* state of low attainment which this report refers to as 'mathematical blockage'. Again, the authors recognise the need to break out of the downward spiral which is determined by confusion, lack of confidence, a continuing lack of success, a growing dislike of the subject, etc. Cockcroft, however, does recognise the existence of 'low general ability' when the 'mathematics course needs to be specifically designed to build up a network of simple related areas and their applications, so that the children can feel confident in their ability ....'. Cockcroft concludes:

> 'Failure can only be compounded if efforts are made to build further upon a foundation which does not exist.'

89. Parsons (1959) differentiated the members of a form/class group along a single continuum of achievement according to the ability to live up to expectations imposed by the teacher. In addition, he argued that:

> 'Differentiation along the achievement axis is inevitably a cause of strain, because it confers higher rewards and privileges on one contingent (i.e. group) than on another within the same system.'

This strain, he argues, is alleviated by what he calls 'integrative mechanisms' – such as pastoral systems, counselling and 'guidance' – and 'programmes' for 'lower attainers'. This is the nub of the question. If it is surprising that there is not much more student disaffection, perhaps these integrative mechanisms are fulfilling their desired function in terms of 'student pacification'. There is a constant avoidance of what could be seen as an ever-present potentially explosive conflict.

90. As Reid (1978) has observed:

> 'The formal culture of schools embodies strong elements of what can loosely be termed middle-class culture. The reality is that children from differing social class (normative) backgrounds are differently equipped to respond to it.... the ability to fit into these aspects of the formal culture is clearly a factor in achievement.'

The school, then, through its formal culture, produces well-behaved, conforming achievers and disruptive, non-conforming, non-achieving pupils. It is difficult for some to accept the central message of the hidden curriculum – that in order to achieve, the formal culture of the school must be accepted. The school itself, then, can induce retreatism, rebellion and failure.

91. So what is the nature of the 'failure'?

— Are some pupils failing themselves (that is, against their own previously-established standards and levels of performance)?

— Are they deficient in some way? Are they failing in relation to norm-referenced, generally agreed criteria?

— Are they failing the school – in terms of failing to live up to its expectations?

— Are they being failed by the school by being presented with inappropriate targets or by being excluded from its formal culture? Are they failed at the deep structural level?

— Are they experiencing a failure of interaction brought about by a breakdown in cultural and linguistic communication between themselves and the school?

These are all questions which cannot be ignored.

IX. DILEMMA SEVEN: CENTRAL DIRECTION VERSUS LOCAL AUTONOMY: CENTRALISATION OR DECENTRALISATION?

92. As with many other centrally inspired initiatives and innovations, the Lower Attaining Pupils Programme is mediated at local (LEA and individual school) level. Consequently, as much of the research into the process of innovation conducted in the United States has underlined, the autonomy given to LEAs and schools serves to render the innovation vulnerable to 'mutual adaptation'. What emerges in the classroom is often a far cry from the original intentions of the developers of the innovation – in this case the DES. Except, of course, that it was left to the local projects to come up with the innovation – within loosely determined parameters. There is a classic paradox here, however, because research also tells us that teachers are far more committed to innovations of which they feel that they have *ownership* – and are thus able to amend to suit their everyday purposes. This process of 'negotiation' is a real dilemma for the original instigators/developers who want the teachers to be committed, but also to retain the 'fidelity' of their ideal innovation.

93. Who owns this particular innovation? And who are the innovators? These are two interesting questions. And which is more effective – externally-imposed, 'top-down' change or the more organic 'bottom-up' approach to development?

94. What is certain, however, is that the project schools in Northamptonshire are being encouraged to launch into self-development. And this is often the emphasis within a pilot project: to establish the opportunity to work in a given field, lay on certain resources and support mechanisms and then research what the teachers and schools actually achieve.

95. In addition, of course, it has long been recognised that within the ring-fence protection of local autonomy shelter both radical innovativeness and slothful apathy – within schools and classrooms. Sir Keith views this curriculum diversity sheltered by local autonomy as a two-edged sword – and he questions whether the 'costs' (hidden pockets of poor performance and variable performance) are worth the 'gains' (innovativeness for some). Local autonomy also gives headteachers much more power of attorney in such matters. The quality of leadership becomes crucial. It is also clear that, with recent initiatives such as consortium-working, inter-school collaboration and federalism, schools and their headteachers are having to jettison a measure of this autonomy in order to gain other advantages. As Clunies-Ross and Wimhurst (1984) point out:

'There is a need for both school- and local authority-based initiatives

> to link schools more closely with FE colleges, with industry and with the local community ... Now is the time for a review of the existing educational programmes provided for pupils in their final years at schools who are not following traditional academic courses, for an evaluation of present facilities and for the development of new, *collaborative* initiatives to take place.'

96. Such sentiments were, of course, echoed by Sir Keith Joseph when he called for 'co-operation between schools, local employers, parents and FE colleges in the development of more practical courses', which 'might lead to more learning outside the classroom'. There is an important linkage between this particular dilemma – whether to encourage schools to trade-in their autonomy – and the previous dilemma concerning the location of learning.

97. Sir Keith points out, if new forms of co-operation between schools, college, employers and the community are to be investigated, such a 'pressing problem' needs to be 'dealt with jointly' by the partners in the educational service. 'Picking up the consorting habit', according to Warner (1983), enables a local authority to create synergistically a whole educational edifice (consisting of residential experience, linked courses, work experience, implementation of new teaching/learning styles, pooling of resources, etc.) which the schools – the individual parts – would not be capable of achieving.

98. Local co-ordination, then, is seen as having great potential – to provide local coherence and continuity *within* nationally agreed frameworks. But the dilemma remains – will the teachers go along with it? Will they be committed? Sir Keith is obviously aware of this fact:

> 'But you and I know that good education is made by good teachers. I take it as axiomatic that teachers will be fully involved in the programme.'

99. Northamptonshire's school-focused approach to INSET has given teachers the opportunity to review regularly the role of their school and their own teaching in relation to the changing needs of their pupils. But the unit of change here is seen as *the school* – institutional development is the focus. What will be the price of departing from this 'base' of operations?

100. The equation is an obvious one: local autonomy/school-based development can invoke teacher involvement and commitment at the cost of uniformity of direction. This will always be the case within a model which allows for the *normative planning* to be conducted at the centre and *strategic/operational planning* at the periphery.

X. CONCLUSION

101. Sir Keith Joseph originally mentioned that the programme would provide lessons to be applied to the curriculum of *all* secondary school pupils. He was right, given this ambitious intention, to draw our attention to the need for INSET provision.

102. Whether the Northamptonshire project would cater for the full 40% of pupils mentioned by Sir Keith is beyond the purview of this paper. One can conjecture, however, that it might prove difficult to lure pupils away from examination courses. What will be the impact of parental opinions/expectations?

103. How will the project be timetabled in the schools? Within the options? Alongside the options? As a track across the curriculum? In interdisciplinary blocks? In mixed groups? Sir Keith Joseph, of course, requested a flexible system in which pupils could opt in and out. The Bristol report mentioned above (paragraph 74) calls for a 'systematic network of tutorials, small group teaching and learning, and project work cutting across normal subject boundaries'. The fear, perhaps, is that a school might be tempted to identify a small number of pupils at the end of the third year and place them on a special course which might effectively, perhaps not theoretically, remove them from the options system for most subjects – differentiation writ large.

104. Perhaps the best scenario to contemplate at this stage is to think of the developments introduced within the national initiative eventually informing the whole curriculum for all pupils, while, in the meantime, offering some pupils a genuine education as opposed to just training. Denis Lawton said (in a speech at the Cambridge Institute of Education) that active learning, negotiation, problem solving, personal development, communication skills, etc. are the stuff of education as opposed to training. Which interpretation (or culture) – education or training – is being promoted in classrooms must be the central focus of *empirical evaluation*. If, however, such educational changes continue to mushroom, they might well prove something other than 'status confirming' as far as, say, working-class pupils are concerned.

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APPENDIX: NORTHAMPTONSHIRE'S LAPP PROJECT – A SUMMARY OF THE EMPIRICAL EVALUATION UNDERTAKEN BY FEU

1. This appendix summarises the findings of the evaluation of Northamptonshire's Lower Attaining Pupils Programme (LAPP) project which was undertaken by FEU at the invitation of the LEA. Evaluation data was obtained by interviews, questionnaires and observation from pupils, parents, teachers and managers from schools, FE colleges and other providers.

Background

2. In July 1982 it was announced that EEC funds were available for a number of pilot projects 'to improve the preparation of young people for work and to facilitate their transition from education to working life'. Following the EEC announcement, the Secretary of State spoke to the Council of Local Education Authorities (CLEA) conference in Sheffield a programme of Government about funded projects to 'put into practice, and to evaluate, new approaches to the education of lower attaining pupils, especially in the last two years of compulsory education'. The aim of the programme was to introduce a more effective education, with a practical slant, for those pupils for whom public examinations at 16+ were not designed, and LEAs were invited to submit proposals. Northamptonshire's submission received DES approval and it was also selected to participate in the EEC pilot programme.

3. Northamptonshire LEA invited the FEU to evaluate their LAPP project, and the Unit's Board of Management, having regard to the age range of the pupils, agreed to the involvement of the Unit on the assumption that:

— the nature of the curriculum and its implementation were those that the FEU could support;
— there was involvement of, and therefore implications for, FE colleges;
— the FEU would be acceptable to all concerned in Northamptonshire;
— the evaluation would not take a disproportionate amount of FEU funding.

4. The LEA selected six schools to be funded and designated as project schools* and a project infrastructure was established. This comprised a project director (an LEA inspector), a county project leader and clerical assistant, and six school

* A further six schools were designated as 'non-funded' project schools, but evaluation evidence on these is not included here.

project leaders. Each school was required to form a school project advisory group to include parent representatives, governors, careers officers etc. A county project advisory group was also established, chaired by a member of the Education Committee.

5 The six schools recruited the first entry cohort for what was called the Northamptonshire 14-16 Curriculum Project to start in September 1983.

Target group

6. LAPP was launched in the belief that about 40% of fourth and fifth year pupils were not benefiting fully from school. This implied that traditional examination orientated courses were not appropriate for a large minority. Northamptonshire largely accepted this definition of lower attaining pupils and saw as suitable those who would otherwise be entered for one or two CSEs, or less.

7. However, the project shools targeted their attention at around 10% of the age cohort. It was felt that appropriate staff could be deployed to mount an 'alternative' curriculum for this proportion without narrowing the range of examination options too much for other pupils. The project groups contained pupils with records of one or more of the following: low motivation, low ability; poor attendance; and uncooperative behaviour. More boys than girls were so identified and recruited to the project.

8. Recruitment to the project tended to involve two processes:

— *Preselection* of likely candidates on the basis of test results, attendance records and teachers' views. Schools' lists of pupils were shaped by a desire to form cohesive groups and to include a reasonable proportion of girls.

— *Recruitment* of those preselected through negotiation with pupils and parents. Care was taken to explain the project's aims and key activities to parents who were usually persuaded of the value of the project's approach despite traditional respect for examinations. Some schools allowed pupils to take a minimal number of CSE courses and parents welcomed such arrangements.

Values

9. Teachers, parents and pupils agreed on the importance of developing literacy skills and independence, but some priorities varied. Pupils and parents valued highly careers education, understanding the world of work and learning skills for a job; they felt education for leisure and art, music, drama and dance had no real value. Conversely, teachers put high value on education for leisure and low value on learning skills for a job and understanding the world of work. There was some evidence of concern by teachers as to whether the project made sufficent provision for aesthetic experience.

Curriculum aims

10. Northamptonshire's submission to the DES set out its general objectives. The main curricular aims stated were to:

- equip pupils with the necessary skills for adult life;
- enhance the skills and concepts of communication, literacy and numeracy in a practical way.

To achieve these, the project would seek to:

- increase co-operation between secondary schools and colleges of further education;
- expand the use of work experience;
- develop practical projects within the community with the co-operation of local employers and other agencies;
- tackle the curriculum as a whole;
- provide appropriate in-service training.

11. Each school was encouraged to develop its own curriculum, following these general objectives. There was broad agreement between headteachers and school project leaders whose main aims were to:

- improve pupils' self-images, ambitions and status in the school;
- increase social integration, self-control and tolerance of others;
- improve basic skills and general education by providing a high quality, balanced education, emphasising practical approaches to learning;
- raise vocational expectations and attainment;
- increase motivation and the enjoyment of learning through a curriculum relevant to pupils' needs and interests, negotiated within secure pupil-teacher relationships.

Curriculum design

12. Northamptonshire's general objectives provided the basis for curriculum design. Schools sought to achieve the two main curricular aims through:

- *school-based provision* which generally included:
— courses to develop 'life skills'
— elements to increase awareness of working life (e.g. careers education, mini companies, work induction programmes)
— practical subjects to provide a foundation for adult hobbies

— an introduction to computers
— timetabled English and maths lessons

- *residential courses*, usually outside the county

- *further education* link-courses offering:

— a range of half-term 'taster options' for fourth years
— fewer but longer options for fifth years

- *community experience* including:

— group work on practical community projects for fourth and fifth years
— individual community placements for fifth years

- *work experience* normally entailing:

— a two- to three-week block of simulated work experience in an MSC Training Workshop for fourth years
— work placements on employers' premises for fifth years

Curriculum models

13. Curriculum development was evolutionary and pragmatic, and schools adopted different curriculum models, such as:

- *a subject-dominated curriculum*: subject departments allocated staff, teaching and learning approaches tended to relate to subject specialisms, and integration tended to be patchy;

- *individually negotiated, flexible arrangements*: much attention was paid to tutoring and the development of attitudes, less to checklisting basic skills;

- *integrated on a modular basis*: staff were assigned on a roster, some modules determined more by teachers' interests and specialisms than pupils' needs;

- *integrated on a thematic basis*: assignments and projects were developed by teams of teachers, with content planned and coverage checked against a stated core of curriculum aims.

Integration

14. The absence of an agreed common core of curriculum aims and objectives for the project allowed flexibility in terms of content but made integration more difficult to achieve. Some schools banked assignments and planned to use multi-activity base accommodation to develop team teaching and integrated approaches. Teachers prepared pupils for experiences outside school, but few deliberately planned the integration of their teaching with work done at college,

in training workshops or in the community. There was some duplication and overlap.

Teaching and learning strategies

15. Practical activities, discussion and assignment work were used extensively. Pupils needed frequent feedback and active learning methods made heavy demands on classroom management skills. Group tasks stimulated pupils to share ideas, take responsibility and work towards common goals.

16. Schools provided opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to develop:

- *communication skills*: teachers put more emphasis on oral than written work and pupils communicated with a range of adults;

- *literacy skills*: through individual target setting and written work related to personal interests and relevant purposes;

- *social skills*: teachers gave these high priority, using group work and residential experience to develop peer relationships. Out-of-school experiences made broader demands;

- *numeracy skills*: practical activities allowed skills to be applied, but timetabled maths was not always relevant, practical or individually paced;

- *practical skills*: schools emphasised their development alongside creative and problem-solving skills and designed project work to enable pupils to achieve an end product they could be proud of. Colleges and training workshops put more emphasis on skill acquisition and less on personal and creative development. On work experience, the end product was the primary focus of activity;

- *personal qualities*: pupils were encouraged to take decisions and exercise responsibility through practical tasks, with visitors and on visits. Teamwork on community projects and residentials required co-operation and tolerance.

17. Project teachers emphasised personal development and sought to equip pupils with practical knowledge and understanding relevant to adult and working life. This was extended by provision made by other agencies. Colleges of FE offered opportunities for vocational sampling and the experience of a more 'adult' teaching approach which some fourth years found difficult to adapt to. Training workshops offered a sheltered 'industrial' environment, emphasising time-keeping, commitment to the task and preparation for the discipline of working life. Community work allowed pupils to put others before themselves, to provide a service and feel valued in doing so.

18. Pupils experienced a wide variety of environments, each with its own culture, regulations and norms, demands and rewards. Out-of-school experiences did not always appear as a planned teaching strategy, or as an integrated part of a whole curriculum. They did, however, enable young people to develop a wider vocabulary of reactions, and a greater awareness and understanding of the community and their role within it.

Negotiation

19. The range of opportunities for pupil negotiation varied according to the availability of out-of-school arrangements and whether pupils were allowed to take additional courses such as CSEs or CGLI 365. Substantial efforts were made to find community and work experience placements to match pupils' interests. Pupils usually selected from options offered by FE colleges and training workshops but scope for choice within an option was often restricted. The assumption was made by FE that a fairly instructional mode was to be expected in craft areas.

20. Pupil choice tended to limit equal opportunities; where options associated with traditional gender roles were offered, stereotyped choices resulted. Some FE options, however, were designed to preclude stereotyped choices, and community experience provided significant opportunities for non-traditional activity. For example, girls on a community project were successfully motivated to engage in tree-felling and boys in community placements worked with children and old people.

21. Schools tended to provide opportunities for pupil negotiation based more on interests than on needs. Some teachers, however, were developing more flexible approaches, guiding pupil choice and designing individual work programmes. Pupils required encouragement to take responsibility for their own learning, and a degree of uncertainty regarding the boundaries of negotiation was apparent. In some cases, pupils had been allowed to opt out of trying new skills, and challenging experiences had been avoided.

Assessment, review and profiling

22. A project profile was developed by the County Project Leader and school project leaders. Advice was obtained from employers, FE and careers staff; and arrangements for external validation made with City and Guilds. The City and Guilds validated profile became fully operational in the six schools in the project's second year. Its introduction shaped formative profiling, involving assignment sheets for sizeable tasks, log books and employers' reports, and a portfolio of evidence of achievement.

23. School project leaders played the key role in *formative profiling* and instructed colleagues in the preparation of assessment evidence. FE teachers,

training workshop, community and work placement staff supplied school project leaders with simple reports, rather than contributing directly to the profile. Pupils discussed a version compiled from the various reports in formal review sessions and profile statements were agreed and recorded. Most pupils considered this helpful in showing them their strengths and weaknesses and how well they had done.

24. Teachers valued formative profiling on the grounds that regular feedback and review of progress motivated pupils to improve their performance. Assessment methods tended to be informal, but teachers involved pupils in self-assessment and review to varying degrees and not all referred to profiles when assessing work. Some uncertainty about the meaning of the profile statements and their relation to curriculum objectives was evident, and many teachers identified a need for more staff development related to profile assessment.

25. City and Guilds validation and the attractive documentation of the *summative profile*, together with a county presentation ceremony, organised with media coverage, were highly valued by pupils and parents and gave status to the project. The summative document provided a positive record of achievement but its market value had yet to be ascertained. Pupils progressing into employment found jobs before receiving their summative profiles. Documentation promoting the project profile was widely distributed by the County Project Leader, but more specific briefing was needed at a local level. Most careers officers felt ill-informed and wanted to receive copies of formative profiles prior to guidance interviews. In general, local discussions had not taken place with FE staff on how the profile might be used to assist progression to FE.

26. For project pupils, the profile tended to displace school reports. Year heads valued its openness, the inclusion of information not normally provided and its effect on pupil development, but they noted that achievement was often still seen in terms of examination success. They also felt that year heads should make a greater contribution to the profile by commenting on school activities, general attitudes and behaviour in order to encourage project pupils to be seen as part of the school.

27. Amendments made to the project profile in the light of experience have been accommodated by City and Guilds and its development has closely resembled that of City and Guilds' own 14-16 profile, piloted by six LEAs. Profiling is also developing in Northamptonshire within the DES-funded Records of Achievement pilot project and within TVEI; interrelationships are being discussed.

Tutoring and pastoral care

28. Close, caring relationships tended to develop between pupils and a core of project teachers. Most handled everyday discipline through individual discus-

sion, encouraging pupils to take responsibility for their behaviour. Year heads and senior staff had fewer behavioural problems to deal with; problems referred to them were usually severe.

29. Most schools used the form-tutor group system to integrate pupils with the main school, but pupils generally formed closer relationships with their project group tutor. Timetabled form-tutor group periods were often missed because of out-of-school activities, or sometimes they were simply avoided.

The effect on mainstream

30. Teachers not directly involved with the project were pleased to 'see something being done' for lower attaining pupils and thought their improved attitude and behaviour produced 'a better atmosphere' in the school. A few suspected double standards, with project pupils being treated more leniently, making more choices and enjoying considerable personal attention. Many were unsure what the 'alternative' curriculum involved and were wary of positive discrimination. They found examination groups easier and more pleasant to teach and noted the benefits to other fourth and fifth year pupils of the separate LAPP provision for their less able, more disruptive or less academically motivated peers.

31. There was some evidence of interest in profiling, in using more practical approaches within mainstream teaching and in extending the project's approaches to the next ability band. In general, however, the project remained relatively isolated within the school and had little influence on the predominantly single-subject, examination orientated curriculum. The range of experiences available to project pupils aroused some envy from other fourth and fifth year pupils.

Pupil achievement

32. Almost all those connected with the project felt pupils had achieved more than would have been expected formerly. The pupils benefited significantly in terms of their self-confidence, self-image and their attitudes towards adults, school and learning in general. The evidence of greater pupil achievement included:

- *Improved attendance, reduced truancy and reduced school exclusions.* Parents reported their children were 'happier' with school; pupils reported the project had kept them interested. Attendance rates improved by about 6% in the project's first year.

- *A high percentage progressing to employment, YTS or full-time education.* Compared with mainstream Easter leavers, project pupils obtained work and training places more readily and fewer were unemployed.

- *Wider perspectives and individuality*. The range of experiences provided outside school extended pupils' horizons and they acquired more understanding of what was expected of them.

- *Work done with pride and care*. Practical skills were developed to an enhanced level.

- *Improved communication skills* noted by parents and teachers. Pupils were offered a wide variety of situations in which to express themselves and talk to a range of adults.

- *Improved achievement in the areas of numeracy and literacy* perceived by 55-65% of pupils. The percentage was slightly higher for literacy than numeracy.

- *Increased reliability, responsibility, confidence and maturity* noted by parents and teachers. They thought pupils had benefited from closer relationships with staff and the opportunity to work in small groups. Positive interest, individual help and more adult treatment encouraged growth in self-confidence, self-awareness, maturity and social skills.

33. The reasons given for improved pupil achievement included:

- effective selection of the pupils most likely to benefit from the project's approaches;

- staff commitment and enthusiasm;

- active and participatory learning;

- timetabling that enabled pupils to pursue tasks without frequent interruption;

- the avoidance of confrontation as a deliberate tactic because of good relationships with core staff in small groups;

- positive reinforcement of achievement rather than delineation of failure;

- quality tutoring;

- the 'Hawthorne effect' of the project's status in the school.

The family and the community

34. Some tutors made many home visits and special parents' evenings were held, sometimes attended by FE staff. Parents generally appreciated their children's improved behaviour and employability and staff interest, but traditional expec-

tations of schooling caused some misunderstandings. While many parents felt some homework desirable, others noted that its absence enabled the family to spend more time together.

35. Parents had previously received school reports which emphasised poor academic performance. In contrast, the project provided more positive evidence of what their children could do. The high quality of articles made (e.g. reupholstered furniture, pottery, toolboxes, etc.) increased parental confidence in their children's abilities.

36. The project encouraged schools to develop closer links with the local community. Relationships were built as pupils helped in playgroups, schools, old people's centres, hospitals and private homes; community projects had positive and tangible results. Schools involved local employers as work experience providers and visiting speakers, and some were invited to join school project advisory groups.

Leadership

37. The leadership provided by the County Project Leader and school project leaders was crucially important to the development of the project. The County Project Leader's responsibilities included:

- liaising with visitors, evaluators, etc.;
- publicising the project through exhibitions, presentations and a project newsletter;
- negotiating with the many agencies involved directly (FE) or indirectly (CGLI);
- providing staff development, first for school project leaders and then for a wider group;
- building a strong and supportive school project leader team;
- leading and supporting curriculum development, e.g profiling;
- managing the project budget.

In a local context school project leaders had similar responsibilities in addition to teaching and personal tutoring. Most received support from a senior colleague, but adjustment to this wide range of demands was stressful.

Resources

38. *Further education*: each project school received an allowance for staffing which was used to deploy additional staff in the school and/or to purchase FE. The LEA allowed a free market to operate and agreements reached locally by schools and colleges varied. College co-ordinators felt the project brought different experiences to FE teachers and challenges that were stimulating. However, there was no assurance of a continuing role and each 'course' arranged was a separate, temporary agreement. This served to discourage the development of commitment and expertise on the part of FE staff.

39. *Training workshops*: provided block placements for project pupils by utilising unfilled YTS places. Each negotiated separate financial arrangements with schools. Charges varied, but tended to reflect the cost of materials rather than the real cost of provision. In general, operational problems were primarily due to fluctuating numbers of YTS trainees. Workshop managers felt the provision made for the project increased pupils' and teachers' awareness of the potential benefits of YTS. The facility, however, was never secure and integration with other elements of the project needed further development.

40. *Equipment and consumables*: funds allocated to schools were used to enrich the curriculum through residential courses, to purchase additional learning material and for some educational hardware. A little money helped school project leaders when negotiating with school departments for specialist inputs. There was little shortage of equipment or consumables in the schools but, in terms of time and money, the project generated considerable transport costs, especially in rural areas.

41. *Accommodation*: plans were made to convert school accommodation to multi-activity bases to allow greater flexibility in teaching and learning. These were slow to be implemented and the development of teamwork was hampered. In some schools, access to specialist accommodation was limited.

42. *Staffing*: the project tended to involve a core of teachers who were heavily engaged, and other 'contributing' teachers. In terms of commitment to low achievers and close pupil-teacher relationships, suitable staff were at a premium. In the project's second year, two entry cohorts imposed a severe strain.

43. *Time*: school project leaders had reduced timetables and spent much time on liaison with outside agencies. Co-ordination, especially for profiling, was also time consuming. Team meetings were impeded by industrial action; discussions with staff tended to take place on an individual basis and more strain was put on the core of project teachers.

Staff development

44. The short timescale in which the project was set up mitigated against preparatory staff development. Staff development therefore occurred in response to issues and needs arising during the project. The exchange of perceptions with colleagues through visits to see other projects in the UK and Europe and through regular meetings between county and school project leaders was highly valued. School project leaders benefited from considerable staff development in the project's first year, and have since become advisers and resources for teachers within their own project teams. The LEA Inspectorate has arranged short courses and provided helpful advice.

45. Although the clientele for staff development programmes widened as the project developed, industrial action had an effect. A significant number of teachers, however, felt they had developed new competences and had mainly learned by doing. Where the support of colleagues was provided through team meetings and the focus was on practical tasks such as planning integrated assignments, considerable benefit accrued. In general, staff development was an amalgam of learning from experience, reflection, discussion and instruction.

46. Occasionally, individual careers officers, educational welfare officers and FE staff participated in staff development initiatives. However, for many, the project did not constitute a sufficiently large proportion of their work to justify their own investment in staff development. One school project leader provided detailed briefings for FE staff at the beginning of the academic year.

47. The main staff development needs reported by the schools were:

- techniques to improve pupil motivation and pupil-teacher relationships;
- the use of aims and objectives in curriculum design;
- how to incorporate process skills in teaching and learning;
- the development of individualised learning programmes;
- assessment methods that recognise the value of experience;
- how to teach with greater vocational relevance;
- self-evaluation skills.

These needs are not unique to LAPP, many of them apply to various pre-vocational and other programmes.

Evaluation

48. The project was monitored by the County Project Leader in association with the Project Director, and county and school project leaders met regularly to review progress. Usually a deputy head in charge of curriculum monitored and supported the School Project Leader.

49. School project advisory groups had wide representation but their effectiveness in evaluation depended on the extent to which headteachers used them. The County Project Advisory Group rotated its meetings around the project schools, receiving regular reports from school project leaders. It set up an evaluation sub-committee to which the FEU evaluation team reported. In addition to the evaluation of the project by FEU on behalf of the LEA, the NFER has undertaken a national evaluation of all LAPP schemes for the DES. The project was also visited by HMI.

50. A commitment has been made by Northamptonshire LEA both to maintaining the 14-16 Curriculum Project in the six schools which received the original funding and to extending it to all schools wishing to participate. In September 1986 eight additional schools received project funding, and six 'associate' schools were allocated some small funds to prepare for their entry as full project schools in September 1988.

51. Details of action taken stemming from recommendations made by the FEU evaluation team and the local evaluation reports published by the LEA are available on request from the 14-16 Curriculum Project Office, Cliftonville Middle School, Cliftonville Road, Northampton NN1 5BW.

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Objectives
The objects for which **The Further Education Unit (FEU)** is established are to promote, encourage and develop the efficient provision of further education in the United Kingdom and for that purpose:
a) to review and evaluate the range of existing further education curricula and programmes and to identify overlap, duplication, deficiencies and inconsistencies therein;
b) to determine priorities for action to improve the provision of further education and to make recommendations as to how such improvement can be effected;
c) to carry out studies in further education and to support investigations of and experimentation in, and the development of, further education curricula and to contribute to and assist in the evaluation of initiatives in further education;
d) to disseminate and publish information, and to assist in the dissemination and publication of information, about recommendations for and experiments and developments in further education.

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